ECCLESIASTICAL ARCHITECTURE.

The character of periodical reviews is at this time very different from what it was originally, when they did simply what they professed to do, namely, gave you a notion of the books named at the head of the article, and their own opinion thereon. You now find, in addition sometimes to this, and sometimes indeed altogether without it, the reviewer's own views on the *subject* of the works named, so that they present, in fact, a series of essays on the various topics successively brought before the public by writers. Thus in the present number of *The Quarterly*, "Vacher's Parliamentary Pocket-book" introduces a paper on Whig Tactics; "The Crescent and the Cross" a disquisition on the results of French ambition in the Levant; and the beautiful works of Mr. Gally Knight and the Chevalier Bunsen, a valuable and interesting essay, seventy pages long, on ecclesiastical architecture, more especially as regards plan.

Such of our readers as may not be able to see the Review in question will be glad to find a portion of this latter article in our pages; to those who *may* be able, it will serve as an inducement to obtain the whole.

The writer thus introduces his subject:—

"Your Jonathan Oldbuck, your staunch antiquary of the genuine plodding Gough and Stukeley school, who values architecture historically, and merely historically, escapes innumerable distresses by which Sir Visto would be crazed. He considers every ancient building as an ancient chronicle: Ordericus Vitalis in Caen stone, Gervasius Dorobernensis in Purbeck marble. He reads his tome for the instruction thereby imparted; he delights in it all. The inelegance of the composition offends him not, neither does he despise the rudeness or coarseness of the illuminations. Continued by successive annalists, he is untroubled by the want of uniformity in style. Each successive generation has added its chapter, its page, its paragraph, its line: speaking words from the soul of those whose bodies are silent in the grave. Though the handwriting may change, and the shape of the letters vary, and the method of narration alter, still your chronicle, like the community to which it belonged, forms one continuous whole. You, if you imbibe Oldbuck's spirit, read it on from year to year, from reign to reign, from century to century, through Anglo-Saxon and cloister-Latin, and cloister-Latin and Norman-French, and Norman-French and Chaucerian-English, as one authentic volume. You cannot bear that the smallest portion should be expunged, even for the purpose of being supplied by the most clever conjectural emendation. Still less would you wish that some ingenious popular literateur, acting abbot or prior, were to suppress the original, and recompose the whole in affected archaisms, so as to make the story look as he fancies it might have done, if compiled in the twelfth century. 'L'abito non fa il monaco;' he will not gain Anselm's sanctity by arraying himself in Anselm's cowl.

'Is it not a great blemish, Mr. Oldbuck,' says Sir Visto, 'that the front of our noble Minster should exhibit the deformity of unequal towers; the northern, rude, clumsy Norman, whose stumpy bulk contrasts so disagreeably with the delicate proportions of its southern companion?'

'By no means, Sir Visto; the rude, clumsy, northern tower is a certificated work of the times of the Conquest. It is coeval with Archbishop Lanfranc. The tower constitutes one of the most authentic pages in our architectural history; if you tear the page out, the facts it tells you are lost.'

'Surely that perpendicular tracery, blocking up the circular arches of the solemn transept windows, should be removed, and the composition restored to its primitive simplicity?'

'You are quite mistaken. In its primitive state the transept was not simple: every capital and moulding being rich in gold and colour. By letting in more light, the blanched walls would only look more cold and crude, and at the same time you deprive the building of the instructive lessons this portion imparts; for I, Sir Visto, always view the material church as an emblem of the spiritual church, and the perpendicular tracery is to my mind a memorial of the era of Chicheley and Stafford, and Gerson and the Council of Constance, when so many changes were fermenting in Christendom. Were I reading to the collegers here, I should make them attend to such architectural features, as a branch of technical memory.'

'Well, Monkbarns, but what should be done with that diminutive gable; the debased Gothic of the Elizabethan era? Would you not restore the cathedral to its former lofty proportions?'

'By no means, Sir Visto; don't meddle: the walls have been so weakened by the demolition of the refectory and cloister which once adjoined them, that they could not bear their pristine altitude. You would ruin the building by such injudicious and cruel kindness. The whole pitch of the roof has been lowered to suit our modern mode of carpentry, and the choir could not now carry the beams according to their ancient elevation. The *king-post* and the *queen-post*, so essential to all such high trussing, have been very materially shortened by the alterations begun in the time of William and Mary. If you attempted to raise the cross-crowned pinnacle to the standard of William of Wykeham, it would tumble down.'

'Well, but Mr. Oldbuck, surely *you* will not plead for those misshapen porches and doorways, with heavy arches and contorted pillars, introduced by the masons of the age of Laud?'

'I do. Uncouth as they may be, they possess a decided ecclesiastical character: they are in keeping with the cathedral chaunt. They are more than mere ornaments; although both you and the utilitarian would strangely coalesce—so constantly do extremes meet—in casting them off. Our poor dear old church has been so hacked about, that Laud's additions have become incorporated in the original work. Cut them away, you will topple the whole edifice upon your head.'

Thus are the feelings of our antiquary displayed. There is no one vestige or memorial of past times, which he does not consider as appealing to the heart. The rays which, dimly discerned in the dark niche, beneath the battered canopy, surrounded the head of St. Erasmus' demolished statue, remind him of the error of the worship, but also of the indecent, nay sacrilegious violence with which it was removed. Refusing to replace the statue, he will not efface the traces of its existence. He seeks not to blot out the St. Christopher peering through the whitewash, the token of the simple faith of past ages, yet he abstains from restoring a portraiture which would be a mockery in our own.

The lead-work in the windows, describing the void outline of the figure which has been dashed out by the despoiler; the head in blank, and the hands in blank, and the long robe in blank, and the feet in blank, at the bottom of the blank by which that long robe is indicated, the ideal, as it were, of form, reproduce in his mind a far more true conception of the building in its glory, because they tell of the calamities it has sustained, than as if the absent stained glass had been replaced by the most glowing vitrifications of Willement or Wailes.

The sepulchral recess is closed by the elaborate trellise, quaintly knotted and contorted, rusty and broken, half hiding the tomb behind. Rusty and broken as the iron may be, Oldbuck advises that it should be let alone; he will not have the enclosure repaired, for with him, mending and marring are synonymous terms, nor will he clear it away for the purpose of giving a better view of the monument: he values the effect of mystery; and though he would not brighten up the curious workmanship of the old craftsmen of St. Eloi, he knows that if it were removed it would be sold in 'naval-store' shop for two-pence the pound.

That reredoss, erected during the short reign of Mary, may be inelegant, and inconsistent with the decorated tracery and the graceful foliage of the battered screen; but, executed in *graffito*, the drawing and hatching produced by scratching off the upper coat, so as to shew the black ground below, it is a valuable memorial of the short sunshine which gleamed upon 'the ancient worship,' as well as evidencing the spreading influence of ultra-montane taste. 'And if the reredoss be taken down,' says Oldbuck, 'I know that to the brokers it will wend its way, and our only specimen remaining of that species of art will be irrecoverably lost.'*

The heavy memorial of the age of our first Stuart, the knight in his stiff armour, the lady in her stiffer ruff and fardingale, block up a portion of the chancel and obscure the ancient Sedilia; but the knight was a benefactor to the poor: he founded the decayed hospital: perhaps the sight of his effigy may yet do some good, as a reproach to his posterity; if you demolish the incumbrance, as you call it, your Sedilia will still continue as unfilled as Banquo's chair.

Our antiquary will not relay the footworn pavements, where the sunken flag-stones mark the once frequent resort of the pilgrims along the aisle, nor, for the sake of trim neatness, mend and replace the altar-steps hollowed by the knees of the worshippers now gathered to their rest. 'Nay,' says Oldbuck, 'I reverence even the ponderous, robust, ample brown woodwork of the choir, with the hurlyburly festoons, coveys of merry plump cherubs, mitres which would give a headache to a wig block, croziers fit to fell a bull, and full-bottomed Corinthian capitals; for they do so put me in mind of the days of good Queen Anne, "Convocation," High Church and Dr. Sacheverell.' So Jonathan Oldbuck ponders and reasons, finding sermons in every stone, and deriving pleasure, and therefore profit, from every token of the successive generations who have worshipped within the consecrated walls.

Ill-judged was the allegory which placed the statues of painting, sculpture, and architecture as the mourners round the tomb of Michael Angelo. We do not pay due honour to Architecture if we consider her as the sister, and therefore the equal, of the mere imitative arts: she is their queen. We want a term to designate the intellectual rank of architecture, so closely connected with the imagination that we can scarcely term it a science, so entirely practical and subservient to our needs, that we can scarcely reckon it as one of the æsthetic arts. And yet the arts must all be coerced into the architect's service. Architecture, as a branch of human wisdom, constitutes a genus of its own. Sculpture and painting are entirely founded upon the imitation of nature, whereas the basis of architecture is utility—utility in every sense, from the lowest to the highest, whilst it is wholly conventional in outward arrangements and forms. Architecture may borrow many a principle from nature; but she consults nature for *lessons*, and not for *models*; and let us here hearken to our friend Mr. Cockerell, and listen to his exposition of this principle, in a passage as remarkable for its acuteness as its truth.

'Sir C. Wren reflected that the hollow spire which he had seen or built in so many varieties was, after all, but an infirm structure; and he sought that model which should enable him to impart to it the utmost solidity and duration. Simple was the original from which he adopted his idea. He found that the delicate shell called torretella, though extremely long, and liable to fracture from its base to its apex, by the action of the water amidst the rocks, was rendered impregnable by the central column, or newel, round which the spiral turned. Therefore, in his spire of St. Bride's he establishes the columella in the centre, round which he forms a spiral staircase to the top, issuing on stages of arched apertures; thus giving us (if not the most beautiful) certainly the most remarkable and enduring spire hitherto erected.

'When Brunelleschi was charged with the erection of the dome of Sta. Maria, at Florence, of nearly equal diameter with that of the

* N.B.—The iron-work of the tombs of Queen Eleanor and Henry II. in the Abbey, having been torn down, was sold as old metal in the Almonry for two-pence a pound. The altar-screen presented by Queen Mary to the cathedral of Canterbury, having been ejected as rubbish (when Lanfranc's tower was demolished), the back panels, ornamented as above described, and in perfect preservation, were seen by us exposed for sale at a broker's in St. Martin's-lane. A provincial paper announces that 'Government intend to completely restore the tombs of Edward the Black Prince and Henry IV. in Canterbury Cathedral,' that is to say, to *destroy* them, and substitute nice bran new ones in their stead—for let words be fairly understood, no tomb or building can be *restored*, unless by previous destruction—witness the 'Ladye Chapel' at St. Mary Overie, Norwich Castle, &c., &c., &c. The Tower of London is to be 'restored' to its 'primitive Norman aspect,' for which purpose the Board of Ordnance intend to demolish the only *genuine specimens* of old English timber buildings (the warders' houses) now remaining in London. *Repair, preserve, uphold* every building and every fragment—*demolish nothing*; but never listen to the siren voice of the *restorer*.

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